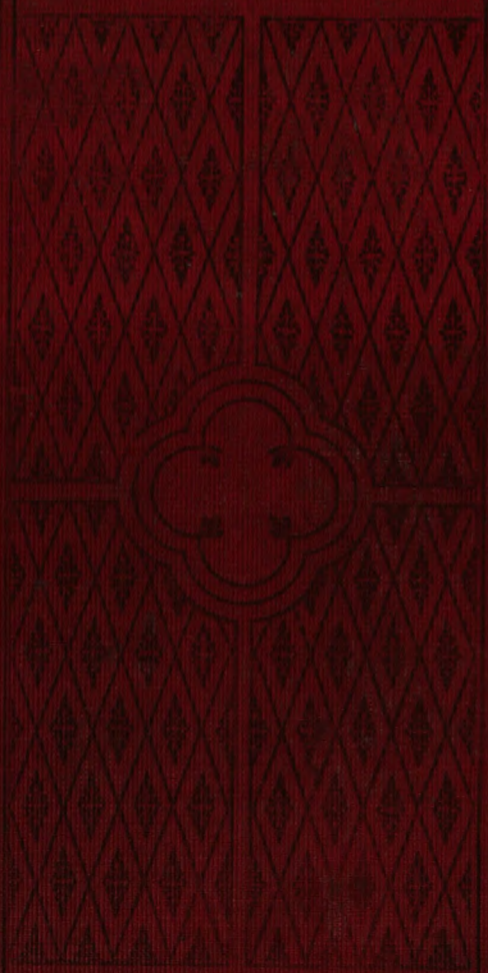
SISTERS OF CHARITY



MRS. JAMESON

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SISTERS OF CHARITY,

ABROAD AND AT HOME.

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LONDON:
A. and G. A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-street-Square.

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SISTERS OF CHARITY

CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT,

ABROAD AND AT HOME.

BY MRS. JAMESON.

"It is manifest that all the human material which Christian endeavours may be able to mould into order and usefulness will be required for the growing exigencies of the state." — Rev. Mr. CLAY. (*Report on the Preston Jail*, 1852.)

LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, & LONGMANS.
1855.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE been induced to publish this little Lecture in its present form, because it places some of the questions which are now prominently before the public on grounds which, if not new, are at least not generally admitted, still less advocated. The result of a large amount of private information and of personal observation are here condensed into the smallest possible compass. I have also used unhesitatingly all the published material at hand, from which I could extract either thought, or fact, available for my purpose. I must especially acknowledge my obligations to a little book, entitled

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"Hospitals and Sisterhoods" (published by Murray); to a small pamphlet, entitled "Kaiserswerth on the Rhine" (published by Hookham); and to the Reports of the last-named institution placed in my hands some time ago. Other authorities are referred to in the notes, but I could not certify all. In fact, the following pages contain the spirit—*quintessencié*—of my experience, observation, and reading, on the education and employments of women for many years past.

The subject has suddenly taken a form which appeals to popular sympathies. Names and deeds have, of late, been sounded through the brazen trumpet of publicity, and mixed up, unhappily, with party and sectarian discord, which ought rather to have been whispered tenderly and reverently in our prayers; but since it is so, and cannot now be helped, I have not hesitated to allude to persons and to circumstances which, I trust, are not the less dear because they have become in some sort

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public property, nor the less sacred, because they have become celebrated.

I have received since this Lecture was delivered, or rather *read*, many communications, either expressive of sympathy or illustrating by additional facts the arguments which are here very summarily and unmethodically brought together. I cannot despair of the practical result, however distant it may seem; nor can I look round me without being "transported beyond this ignorant present" into that wiser future, which I as confidently anticipate, as I truly believe in the goodness and all-ruling providence of God.

A. J.

March 26, 1855.

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SISTERS OF CHARITY,

ABROAD AND AT HOME.

A LECTURE

(Delivered privately February 14th, 1855, and printed by desire).

My Friends!

The subject on which I venture to address you is one which will find an interest in every kind heart. It is also one of incalculable social importance. I am to discourse to you of Sisters of Charity, not merely as the designation of a particular order of religious women, belonging to a particular church, but also in a far more comprehensive sense, as indicating the vocation of a large number of women in every country, class, and creed. I wish to point out to you what has been done in other

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countries, and may be done in ours, to make this vocation available for public uses and for social progress.

I have to beg your patience, — your indulgence. It will be necessary for me to advert to subjects on which there exists considerable difference of opinion; while the brevity required by a lecture will not allow me to discuss these at length, or to submit all the arguments which might be advanced in favour of my own convictions. I am obliged to concentrate what I have to say into the smallest possible compass; nevertheless, by recurring to first principles, instead of discussing ways and means, and questions of expediency, I think I shall facilitate the object in view. The deeper we can lay our foundation, the safer will be our superstructure. Therefore, to begin at the beginning.—

There are many different theories concerning the moral purposes of this world in which we dwell, considered, I mean, in reference to us,

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its human inhabitants; for some regard it merely as a state of transition between two conditions of existence, a past and a future; others as being worthless in itself, except as a probation or preparation for a better and a higher life; while others, absorbed or saddened by the monstrous evils and sorrows around them, have really come to regard it as a place of punishment or penance for sins committed in a former state of existence. But I think that the best definition,—the best, at least, for our present purpose,—is that of Shakspeare: he calls it, with his usual felicity of expression, "*this working-day world;*" and it is truly this: it is a place in which work is to be done —work which *must* be done—work which it is *good* to do;—a place in which labour of one kind or another is at once the condition of existence and the condition of happiness.

Well, then, in this working-day world of ours we must all work. The only question is, what shall we do? To few is it granted to choose their work. Indeed, all work worth the

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doing seems to leave us no choice. We are called to it. Sometimes the voice so calling is from within, sometimes from without; but in any case it is what we term expressively our *vocation*, and in either case the harmony and happiness of life in man or woman consists in finding in our vocation the employment of our highest faculties, and of as many of them as can be brought into action.

And work is of various kinds: there are works of necessity and works of mercy;—*head* work, *hand* work;—man's work, woman's work; and on the distribution of this work in accordance with the divine law, and what Milton calls the faultless proprieties of nature, depends the well-being of the whole community, not less than that of each individual.

Domestic life, the acknowledged foundation of all social life, has settled by a natural law the work of the man and the work of the woman. The man governs, sustains, and de-

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fends the family; the woman cherishes, regulates, and purifies it; but though distinct, the relative work is inseparable,—sometimes exchanged, sometimes shared; so that from the beginning, we have, even in the primitive household, not the *division*, but the *communion* of labour.

As civilisation advances, as the social interests and occupations become more and more complicated, the family duties and influences diverge from the central home,—in a manner, radiate from it,—though it is always there in reality. The man becomes on a larger scale, father and brother, sustainer and defender; the woman becomes on a larger scale, mother and sister, nurse and help.

Of course, the relations thus multiplied and diffused are less sacred, less intense, but also less egotistical, less individual, than in the primitive tent of the Arab, the lodge of the red-man, or within the precincts of the civilised

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hearth; but in proportion as we can carry out socially the family duties and charities, and perform socially the household-work, just in such proportion is society safely and harmoniously constituted.

If domestic life be then the foundation and the bond of all social communities, does it not seem clear that there must exist between man and woman, even from the beginning, the communion of love and the communion of labour? By the first I understand all the benevolent affections and their results, and all the binding charities of life, extended from the home into the more ample social relations; and in the latter I comprehend all the active duties, all intellectual exercise of the faculties, also extended from the central home into the larger social circle. When from the cross those memorable words were uttered by our Lord, "Behold thy Mother! Behold thy Son!" do you think they were addressed only to the two desolate mourners who then and there wept at his feet? No—they were spoken, like all his

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words, to the wide universe, to all humanity, to all time!

I rest, therefore, all I have to say hereafter upon what I conceive to be a great vital truth, — an unchangeable, indisputable, natural law. And it is this: that men and women are by nature mutually dependent, mutually helpful; that this communion exists not merely in one or two relations, which custom may define and authorise, and to which opinion may restrict them in this or that class, in this or that position; but must extend to every possible relation in existence in which the two sexes can be socially approximated. Thus, for instance, a man, in the first place, merely sustains and defends his home; then he works to sustain and defend the community or the nation he belongs to: and so of woman; she begins by being the nurse, the teacher, the cherisher of her home, through her greater tenderness and purer moral sentiments; then she uses these qualities and sympathies on a larger scale, to cherish and purify society. But still the man and the woman must continue

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to share the work; there must be the communion of labour in the large human family just as there was within the narrower precincts of home.

You will wonder that I begin with truisms such as no man in his senses ever thinks of disputing; but the wonder is that, while admitted, they are never acted upon. Can you give me any one instance in which this primal law of our being, with regard to the distribution of work, has been taken as the natural and necessary basis for any improvement in legislation or in education? Can you point to any one among these piles of Blue-books and reports,—educational reports, sanitary reports, jail reports, juvenile delinquent reports,—in which such principles are adverted to? It is granted as a principle that ample scope should be given for the man to perform his share of the social work, and ample means of instruction to enable him to perform it well. What provision is made to enable the woman to do *her* work well and efficiently?

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It is not charity, nor energy, nor intelligence which are wanting in our women, any more than dauntless bravery in our men. But something *is* wanting; or surely from so much good material, more positive and extended social benefits would arise. What *is* wanting is more moral courage, more common sense on the part of our legislators. If men were better educated they would sympathise in the necessity of giving a better education to women. They would perceive the wisdom of applying, on a large and efficient scale, the means of health, strength, and progress which lie in the gentler capacities of the gentler sex,—material ready at hand, as yet wasted in desultory, often misdirected, efforts, or perishing inert, or fermenting to evil and despair.

Lying at the source of the mischief we trace a great *mistake* and a great *want.*

The great mistake seems to have been that in all our legislation it is taken for granted that the woman is always protected, always under

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tutelage, always within the precincts of a home; finding there her work, her interests, her duties, and her happiness: but is this true? We know that it is altogether false. There are thousands and thousands of women who have no protection, no guide, no help, no home;—who are absolutely driven by circumstance and necessity, if not by impulse and inclination, to carry out into the larger community the sympathies, the domestic instincts, the active administrative capabilities with which God has endowed them; but these instincts, sympathies, capabilities, require, first, to be properly developed, then properly trained, and then directed into large and useful channels, according to the individual tendencies.

As to the want, what I insist on particularly is, that the means do not exist for the training of those powers; that the sphere of duties which should occupy them is not acknowledged; and I must express my deep conviction that society is suffering in its depths through this great mistake and this great want.

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We require in our country the recognition —the public recognition,— by law as well as by opinion, of the woman's privilege to share in the communion of labour at her own free choice, and the foundation of institutions which shall train her to do her work well.

I am anxious that you should not misunderstand me at the outset with regard to this "*woman-question*," as it has been called. I have no intention to discuss either the rights or the wrongs of women. I think that on this question our relations across the Atlantic have gone a mile beyond the winning-post, and brought discredit and ridicule on that just cause which, here in England, prejudice, custom, ignorance have in a manner crushed and smothered up. It is in this country, beyond all Christian countries, that what has been called, quaintly but expressively, the "feminine element of society," considered as a power applicable in many ways to the amelioration of many social evils, has been not only neglected, but absolutely ignored by those who govern us.

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The woman cries out for the occasion and the means to do well her appointed and permitted work, to perform worthily her share in the natural communion of labour. Because it is denied to her she perishes, "and no man layeth it to heart."

It is true that there is no law which forbids the woman to use her energies; but we might as well say that no law exists in China which forbids a woman to take a walk into the country. The Chinese content themselves with bandaging and crippling the feet of their women, which is found, as a preventive, quite as effectual as any law. In a very entertaining book about China, which has lately appeared, the author, M. Huc, describes some Chinese ladies setting off on a pilgrimage. Hobbling on their cramped feet, and supporting themselves with a stick, they reach the temple to which they are bound. So it is with our women: we attain our objects; but what God made natural, graceful, and easy, is rendered matter of pain and difficulty, is regarded as an indecorum or an

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extravagance, and is very awkwardly and imperfectly achieved if at all.

Now the problem which it is given to us in this age and this country to solve as well as we can,—to solve, I will say it, or perish morally,—has been partially solved by another church in other countries. But before I proceed to consider the subject with reference to the present condition of society and public opinion among us, let it be permitted to me to advert briefly to the institutions of charitable women, in the Roman Catholic Church, not because I think or wish that these institutions could or ought to be carried out among us precisely in the same manner, as a purely religious establishment, subservient to a hierarchy; but because I am anxious to show you the immense results of a well-organised system of work for women.

I know that many well-meaning, ignorant people in this country entertain the idea that, the existence of communities of women, trained

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and organised to help in social work from the sentiment of devotion, is especially a Roman Catholic institution, belonging peculiarly to that church, and necessarily implying the existence of nuns and nunneries, veils and vows, forced celibacy and seclusion, and all the other inventions and traditions which, in this Protestant nation, are regarded with terror, disgust, and derision. I conceive that this is altogether a mistake. The truth seems to me to amount to this: that the Roman Catholic Church has had the good sense to turn to account, and assimilate to itself, and inform with its own peculiar doctrines, a deep-seated principle in our human nature,—a law of life, which we Protestants have had the folly to repudiate. We admire and reverence the beautiful old cathedrals which our Roman Catholic ancestors built and endowed. If we have not inherited them, we have, at least, appropriated them and made them ours; we worship God in them, we say our prayers in them after our own hearts. Can we not also appropriate and turn to account some of the institutions they have left us—inform them with a spirit more

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consonant with our national character and the requirements of the age, and dedicate them anew to good and holy purposes? What prevents us from using Sisters of Charity, as well as fine old cathedrals and colleges, for pious ends, and as a means of social benefit? Are we as stern, as narrow-minded, as deficient in real, loving faith as were our puritanical forefathers, when they not only defaced and desecrated, but would gladly, if they could, have levelled to the earth and utterly annihilated those monuments of human genius and human devotion? Luckily they stand in their beauty, to elevate the minds and hearts of us, the descendants of those who built and dedicated them, and who boast that we have reformed, not destroyed the Church of Christ!—and let me say that these institutions of female charity, to which I have referred, — institutions which had their source in the deep heart of humanity, and in the teaching of a religion of love, — let me say that these are better and more beautiful and more durable than edifices of stone reared by men's hands, and worthy to

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be preserved and turned to pious uses, though we can well dispense with some of those ornaments and appendages which speak to us no more.

It would take far too much time were I to go over the history of the early ages of Christendom, and show you that women, associated under the ruling civil and ecclesiastical powers, were then officially, but voluntarily, employed in works of social good. That these women should have been early associated with the church, and held their duties by ecclesiastical appointment, was natural and necessary, because all moral sway, and all moral influence, and all education, and every peaceful and elevating pursuit, belonged, for many centuries, to the ecclesiastical order only. The singular and beneficent power exercised by the religious and charitable women in those times is remarked by all writers, though none of them refer it to a natural law — a great first cause. The whole of the early history of Christianity is full of examples. I will give

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you one which, on looking over these authorities, struck me vividly.

Paula, a noble Roman lady, a lineal descendant of the Scipios and the Gracchi, is mentioned among the first Christian women remarkable for their active benevolence. In the year 385 she quitted Rome, then still a Pagan city; with the remains of a large fortune, which had been expended in aiding and instructing a wretched and demoralised people, and, accompanied by her daughter, she sailed for Palestine, and took up her residence in Bethlehem of Judea. There, as the story relates, she assembled round her a community of women "as well of noble estate as of middle and low lineage." They took no vows, they made no profession, but spent their days in prayer and good works, having especially a well-ordered hospital for the sick.

In the old English translation of her life there is a picture of this charitable lady which I cannot refrain from quoting: "She was marvellous debonair, and piteous to them that

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were sick, and comforted them, and served them right humbly; and gave them largely to eat such as they asked; but to herself she was hard in her sickness and scarce, for she refused to eat flesh how well she gave it to others, and also to drink wine. She was oft by them that were sick, and she laid the pillows aright and in point; and she rubbed their feet, and boiled water to wash them; and it seemed to her that the less she did to the sick in service, so much the less service did she to God, and deserved the less mercy; therefore she was to them piteous and nothing to herself."

This picture, drawn fifteen hundred years ago, so quaintly graphic, and yet so touching in its simplicity, will, perhaps, bring before the mind's eye of those who listen to me, scenes of the same kind, scenes now enacting in the far, far East, where female ministry has been called upon to do like offices of mercy; — to wash the wounds and smooth the couch, and "lay the pillow aright," of the maimed, the war-broken, the plague-stricken

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soldier. But we must for a while turn back to the past.

It is in the seventh century that we find these communities of charitable women first mentioned under a particular appellation. We read in history that when Landry, Bishop of Paris, about the year 650, founded an hospital, since known as the Hotel-Dieu, as a general refuge for disease and misery, he placed it under the direction of the *Hospitalières*, or nursing-sisters of that time, — women whose services are understood to have been voluntary, and undertaken from motives of piety. Innocent IV., who would not allow of any outlying religious societies, collected and united these hospital-sisters under the rule of the Augustine Order, making them amenable to the government and discipline of the Church. The novitiate or training of a *Sœur Hospitalière* was of twelve years' duration, after which she was allowed to make her profession. At that time, and even earlier, we find many hospitals expressly founded for the reception of the sick pilgrims and

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wounded soldiers returning from the East, and bringing with them strange and hitherto unknown forms of disease and suffering. Some of the largest hospitals in France and the Netherlands originated in this purpose, and were all served by the Hospitalières; and to this day the Hotel Dieu, with its one thousand beds, the hospital of St. Louis, with its seven hundred beds, and that of *La Pitié*, with its six hundred beds, are served by the same sisterhood, under whose care they were originally placed centuries ago.

For about five hundred years the institution of the *Dames* or *Sœurs Hospitalières* remained the only one of its kind. During this period it had greatly increased its numbers, and extended all through western Christendom; still it did not suffice for the wants of the age; and the thirteenth century, fruitful in all those results which a combination of widespread suffering and religious ferment naturally produces, saw the rise of another community of compassionate women destined to exercise a far wider influence. These were the *Sœurs*

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Grises or Grey Sisters, so called at first, from the original colour of their dress. Their origin was this:—the Franciscans (and other regular orders) admitted into their community a third or secular class, who did not seclude themselves in cloisters, who took no vows of celibacy, but were simply bound to submit to certain rules and regulations, and united together in works of charity, devoting themselves to visiting the sick in the hospitals or at their own homes, and doing good wherever and whenever called upon. Women of all classes were enrolled in this sisterhood. Queens, princesses, ladies of rank, wives of burghers, as well as poor widows and maidens. The higher class and the married women occasionally served; the widows and unmarried devoted themselves almost entirely to the duties of nursing the sick in the hospitals. Gradually it became a vocation apart, and a novitiate or training of from one to three years was required to fit them for their profession.

The origin of the Béguines, so well known

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in Flanders, is uncertain; but they seem to have existed as hospital sisters in the seventh century, and to have been settled in communities at Liege and elsewhere in 1173. They wear a particular dress, (the black gown, and white hood,) but take no vows, and may leave the community at any time, — a thing which rarely happens.

No one who has travelled in Flanders, visited Ghent, Bruges, Brussels, or indeed any of the Netherlandish towns, will forget the singular appearance of these, sometimes young and handsome, but always staid, respectable-looking women, walking about protected by the universal reverence of the people, and busied in their compassionate vocation. In their few moments of leisure the Béguines are allowed to make lace and cultivate flowers, and they act under a strict self-constituted government, maintained by strict traditional forms. All the hospitals in Flanders are served by these Béguines. They have besides, attached to their houses, hospitals of their own, with a medical staff of physicians and surgeons, under whose direction, in all cases of difficulty, the sisters administer relief;

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and of the humility, skill, and tenderness with which they do administer it, I have never heard but one opinion*; nor did I ever meet with any one who had travelled in those countries who did not wish that some system of the kind could be transferred to England.

In the fifteenth century (about 1443), when Flanders was under the dominion of the Dukes of Burgundy, a few of the Béguines were summoned from Bruges to Beaune to take charge of the great hospital founded

* Howard mentions them with due praise, as serving in their hospital at Bruges. "There are twenty of them; they look very healthy; they rise at four, and are constantly employed about their numerous patients." "They prepare as well as administer the medicines. The Directress of the Pharmacy last year celebrated her jubilee or fiftieth year of her residence in the hospital. (P. 149.)

A recent traveller mentions their hospital of St. John at Bruges as one of the best conducted he had ever met with. "Its attendants, in their religious costume and with their nuns' head-dresses, moving about with a quiet tenderness and solicitude, worthy their name as "Sisters of Charity;" and the lofty wards, with the white linen of the beds, present in every particular an example of the most accurate neatness and cleanliness."

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there by Rollin, the Chancellor of Philip the Good. They were soon joined by others from the neighbouring districts, and this community of nurses obtained the name of *Sœurs de Ste. Marthe,* Sisters of St. Martha. It is worth notice that Martha, who is represented in Scripture as troubled about household cares while her sister Mary "sat at the feet of Jesus, and heard his words," was early chosen as the patroness of those who, instead of devoting themselves to a cloistered life of prayer and contemplation, were bound by a religious obligation to active secular duties. The hospital of Beaune, one of the most extensive and best managed in France, is still served by these sisters. Many hospitals in the South of France, and three at Paris, are served by the same community.

In Germany, the Sisters of Charity are styled "Sisters of St. Elizabeth," in honour of that benevolent enthusiast, Elizabeth of Hungary, whose pathetic story and beautiful legend has been rendered familiar to us by Mr.

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Kingsley's drama. When Joseph II. suppressed the nunneries throughout Austria and Flanders, the Elizabethan Sisters, as well as the Béguines, were excepted by an especial decree, "because of the usefulness of their vocation." At Vienna, a few years ago, I had the opportunity, through the kindness of a distinguished physician, of visiting one of the houses of these Elizabethan Sisters. — There was an hospital attached to it of fifty beds, which had received about 450 patients during the year. Nothing could exceed the propriety, order, and cleanliness of the whole establishment. On the ground-floor was an extensive "Pharmacie," a sort of Apothecaries' Hall; part of this was divided off by a long table or counter, and surrounded by shelves filled with drugs, much like an apothecary's shop; behind the counter two Sisters, with their sleeves tucked up, were busy weighing and compounding medicines, with such a delicacy, neatness, and exactitude as women use in these matters. On the outside of this counter, seated on benches or standing, were a number of sick and infirm, pale, dirty, ragged

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patients; and among them moved two other Sisters, speaking to each individually in a low gentle voice, and with a quiet authority of manner, that in itself had something tranquillising. A physician and surgeon, appointed by the Government, visited this hospital, and were resorted to in cases of difficulty or where operations were necessary. Here was another instance in which men and women worked together harmoniously and efficiently. Howard, in describing the principal hospital at Lyons, which he praises for its excellent and kindly management, as being "so clean and so quiet," tells us that at that time (1776), he found it attended by nine physicians and surgeons, and managed by twelve Sisters of Charity. "There were Sisters who made up, as well as administered, all the medicines prescribed; for which purpose there was a laboratory and apothecary's shop, the neatest and most elegantly fitted up that can be conceived." *

* Howard also mentions the hospitals belonging to the order of Charity, in all countries, as the best regulated, the cleanest, the most tenderly served and man-

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I must notice, with due respect and admiration, another female community, also especially excepted by an Imperial decree when other religious orders were suppressed, and for the same reason;—the Ursulines. We may smile at the childish and melancholy legend of St. Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins, and at the skulls heaped up in a certain mouldy tawdry chapel at Cologne; but of the Ursulines, as a community, we may be allowed to think seriously and even reverently. Their peculiar vocation was the care and instruction of poor children. They had their infant and ragged schools long before we had thought of them. Even from time immemorial there had existed, as we have seen, numerous communities of women to nurse and to pray; and there were isolated instances of women in the higher ranks extraordinarily pious and learned; but a community especially to take charge of

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aged of all he had met with. He mentions the introduction of iron bedsteads into one of their hospitals as something new to him. (In 1776.)

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children, to teach, to educate, and prepare and train teachers, was not known in Christendom till the institution of the Ursuline Sisters in 1537: this originated in Brescia. Angela da Brescia, a woman of birth and fortune, lost at an early age and in a painful manner, a young sister, to whom she was tenderly attached. At first her sorrow took refuge in prayer, seclusion, and pilgrimages, after the fashion of that time. It then took another form, and for the sake of the lost sister she devoted herself to the charitable work of collecting and educating poor female children.

It is touching, it is sadly significant, to see how often the beneficent tendencies of women have, when acted out, taken their especial form from some deep domestic sorrow, or some strong bias of the affections. I could mention several examples I have known, where love or grief has thus modified the element of charity.

The institution of Angela da Brescia was the first of its kind; and so unheard of at this time was the attempt of women to organise a systematic education for their own sex, that when

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Françoise de Saintonge undertook to found such an establishment at Dijon, she was hooted in the streets, and her father called together four doctors learned in the law, "*pour s'assurer qu'instruire des femmes n'était pas un œuvre du démon.*" Even after he had given his consent, he was afraid to countenance his daughter; and Françoise, unprotected, unaided, began her first community of Ursulines in a garret with five poor children. Twelve years afterwards she was almost carried in triumph through the streets of Dijon, bells ringing, flowers strewed in her path. She had succeeded, and the Church took her under its wing; and with that far-sighted wisdom which Mr. Macaulay has pointed out as so characteristic, at once appropriated her and her good works.

These educational institutions multiplied during the next two hundred years, that is, down to the middle of the last century. The Ursuline Sisters behaved admirably during the French Revolution, and though dispersed and their houses suppressed, they followed

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their vocation, and by collecting and teaching the poor orphans of massacred parents, and assisting the village curés, they prevented a mass of evil. As soon as order was restored they were reinstated, but their establishments have not since increased in number. The extension of secular schools in France and Germany, and the popularity of the Sisters of Mercy, who unite the educational duties of the Ursulines with those of the Hospitalières, have in some degree superseded them. I have, however, visited several of the Ursuline houses; and I remember one in particular which I visited five and twenty years ago. To reach the school, where more than 300 children were assembled, I had to pass through a room in which about sixty infants were lying in cradles or on mattresses, while two of the sisterhood were going about with pap, and stilling as well as they could the incessant whimpering and squealing;—it was an absurd and yet a pathetic scene. These were babies left by poor women who had gone to their daily work and were to return for them in the afternoon; and this plan has since been imitated in the

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admirable charity of "*Les Crêches*" instituted at Paris, and similar charities in this country.

Now I do not say that the education given by those good Sisters was the best possible — far from it. It did not go much beyond the a, b, c, the Catechism, and a little needle-work, but it was not worse than that which many of our dame schools afforded fifty years ago; and it established as a principle that women might be permitted to teach as well as to learn; — a principle so familiar to us in these days, that we quite forget to look back to a period when it was a strange, unheard-of novelty, and had to do battle against prejudices, both of the clergy and the people.

It can easily be imagined that institutions like these, composed of such various ingredients, spread over such various countries and over several centuries of time, should have been subject to the influences of time; though from a deep-seated principle of vitality and necessity they seem to have escaped its vicissitudes, for they did not change in character or purpose,

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far less perish. That in ages of superstition they should have been superstitious, that in ages of ignorance they should have been ignorant,—debased in evil selfish times, by some alloy of selfishness and cupidity, — in all this there is nothing to surprise us; but one thing does seem remarkable. While the men who professed the healing art were generally astrologers and alchymists, dealing in charms and nativities,—lost in dreams of the Elixir Vitæ and the Philosopher's Stone, and in such mummeries and quackeries as made them favourite subjects for comedy and satire,—these simple Sisters, in their hospitals, were accumulating a vast fund of practical and traditional knowledge in the treatment of disease, and the uses of various remedies;—knowledge which was turned to account and condensed into rational theory and sound method, when in the 16th century Surgery and Medicine first rose to the rank of experimental sciences and were studied as such. The poor Hospitalières knew nothing of Galen and Hippocrates, but they could observe if they could not describe, and prescribe, if

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they could not demonstrate. Still, in the course of time great abuses had certainly crept into these religious societies,—not so bad or so flagrant, perhaps, as those which disgraced within a recent period many of our own incorporated charities, — but bad enough, and vitiating, if not destroying, their power to do good. The funds were sometimes misappropriated, the novices ill-trained for their work, the superiors careless, the sisters mutinous, the treatment of the sick remained rude and empirical. Women of sense and feeling, who wished to enrol themselves in these communities, were shocked and discouraged by such a state of things. A reform became absolutely necessary.

This was brought about, and very effectually, about the middle of the seventeenth century.

Louise de Marillac — better known as Madame Legras, when left a widow in the prime of life, could find, like Angela da Brescia, no better refuge from sorrow than in active duties, undertaken "for the love of God." She desired to join the Hospitalières, and was met at

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the outset by difficulties, and even horrors, which would have extinguished a less ardent vocation, a less determined will. She set herself to remedy the evils, instead of shrinking from them. She was assisted and encouraged in her good work by a man endued with great ability and piety, enthusiasm equal, and moral influence even superior, to her own. This was the famous Vincent de Paul, who had been occupied for years with a scheme to reform thoroughly the prisons and the hospitals of France. In Madame Legras he found a most efficient coadjutor. With her charitable impulses and religious enthusiasm, she united qualities not always, not often, found in union with them: a calm and patient temperament, and that administrative faculty, indispensable in those who are called to such privileged work. She was particularly distinguished by a power of selecting and preparing the instruments, and combining the means, through which she was to carry out her admirable purpose. With Vincent de Paul and Madame Legras was associated another person, Madame Goussaut, who

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besieged the Archbishop of Paris till what was refused to reason was granted to importunity, and they were permitted to introduce various improvements into the administration of the hospitals. Vincent de Paul and Louise Legras succeeded at last in constituting, not on a new, but on a renovated basis, the order of hospitalières, since known as the Sisterhood of Charity. A lower class of sisters were trained to act under the direction of the more intelligent and educated women. Within twenty years this new community had two hundred houses and hospitals; in a few years more it had spread over all Europe. Madame Legras died in 1660. Already before her death the women prepared and trained under her instructions, and under the direction of Vincent de Paul (and here we have another instance of the successful communion of labour), had proved their efficiency on some extraordinary occasions. In the campaigns of 1652 and 1658 they were sent to the field of battle, in groups of two and four together, to assist the wounded. They were invited into the besieged towns to take

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charge of the military hospitals. They were particularly conspicuous at the siege of Dunkirk, and in the military hospitals established by Anne of Austria at Fontainebleau. When the plague broke out in Poland in 1672, they were sent to direct the hospitals at Warsaw, and to take charge of the orphans, and were thus introduced into Eastern Europe; and, stranger than all! they were even sent to the prison-infirmaries where the branded *forçats* and condemned felons lay cursing and writhing in their fetters. This was a mission for Sisters of Charity which may startle the refined, or confined, notions of Englishwomen in the nineteenth century. It is not, I believe, generally known in this country that the same experiment has been lately tried, and with success, in the prisons of Piedmont, where the Sisters were first employed to nurse the wretched criminals perishing with disease and despair; afterwards, and during convalescence, to read to them, to teach them to read and to knit, and in some cases to sing. The hardest of these wretches had probably some remembrance of a mother's

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voice and look thus recalled, or he could at least feel gratitude for sympathy from a purer, higher nature. As an element of reformation, I might almost say of regeneration, this use of the feminine influence has been found efficient where all other means had failed.

Howard — well named the Good — when inquiring into the state of prisons, about the middle of the last century, found many of those in France, bad as they generally were, far superior to those in our own country; and he attributes it to the employment and intervention of women "in a manner," he says, "which had no parallel in England." In Paris, he tells us, there were religious women "authorised to take care that the sick prisoners were properly attended to; and who furnished the felons in the dungeons with clean linen and medicine, and performed kind offices to the prisoners in general." This, you will observe, was at a period when in England felons, debtors, and untried prisoners were dying by inches of filth and disease and despair. No doubt we

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have much improved since then, but not so much as we ought to have done.*

* "It is astonishing and mortifying to consider how little progress the British legislature has made beyond adopting tardily, partially, and in a vacillating spirit, the improvements suggested seventy-nine years ago by Howard." (*Combe on the Principles of Criminal Legislation, &c.*) Howard's remarks and suggestions in respect to the influence of women in some of the hospitals and prisons abroad do not seem to have been noticed or taken into account at all,—not even by the author of the excellent treatise from which I quote.

It appears to be substantiated by the united testimony of some of the greatest medical authorities among us — by such men as Brodie, Clark, Holland, Owen, Forbes, Conolly, and Carpenter,— prefixed to the above-named treatise, that "criminal legislation and prison discipline will never attain to a scientific, consistent, practical, and efficient character until they have become based on physiology of the brain and nervous system," or, as it is elsewhere expressed, "while the influence of organism on the dispositions and capacities of men continues to be ignored." Then have we not to consider, as a next step, *what* is to influence the organism? Have we not to consider whether there may not exist organic influences arising out of contrasted yet harmonious organisms, — mutual influences which God has contemplated in those sacred and universal relations which bind his creation together, and which

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From recent inquiries I learn that the system of employing Sisters of Charity as visitors

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we ought reverently to use for good instead of allowing pernicious quacks and sensualists most irreligiously to misuse and abuse for evil?

It is difficult to believe in "invincible pertinacity in evil." Nevertheless, it does seem that there are some few miserable creatures who are, in respect to the moral organisation, what idiots are in respect to intellect. We know, however, that a large proportion of the convicts in our prisons, and the sick in our hospitals, and the outcasts in our workhouses are unhappy beings, who have never been brought into contact with goodness elevated by the religious principle, softened by the spirit of love, and refined by habitual gentleness and modesty; and we seem in these matters to be in such constant fear of doing mischief, that we have no courage to do good. We stand in such a dastardly terror of the ridicule which follows mistake or failure, that we ought to die of inward shame, while thus entrenching ourselves in the negative good, instead of bravely meeting the positive evil. The hardest thing which visitors of prisons have to contend with in the wretched delinquents, is not so much the propensity to evil as the ignorance of, and disbelief in, goodness; on men of this stamp and on young offenders, judicious female influence would probably have effect where men in authority, though not less well intentioned and equally judicious, arouse only feelings of suspicion, sullenness, and resistance.

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in the prisons of Piedmont continues to work well, and that none of the evils which might have been apprehended have in any instance occurred.* But supposing they *had* occurred; a hundred mistakes and failures at the outset could not invalidate the principle that what had once succeeded on a large scale would, under similar conditions, again succeed: that the expedient of bringing the female mind and temperament to bear on the masculine brain, (and of course *vice versâ*,) as a physical and moral resource, might be worth a thought, being in accordance with that law of nature or Divine ordinance which placed the two sexes under mutual and sympathetic influences; not always, as the stupid and profligate suppose, for evil and temptation, but for good and for healing: not in one or two relations of life, but in every possi-

* While these sheets are going through the press, I learn that by a recent decree of the Piedmontese Chamber of Deputies all the conventual religious orders and monasteries in Piedmont are to be suppressed, but from this decree the active Sisterhoods of Charity are excepted.

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ble relation in which they can be approximated. This suggestion I merely throw out here as not unworthy of the consideration of our physicians, moralists, and legislators. I leave it to them and to time, and I proceed.

At the commencement of the French Revolution the Sisterhood of Charity had 426 houses in France, and many more in other countries; the whole number of women then actively employed was about 6000. During the Reign of Terror, the superior (Mdlle. Duleau), who had become a Sister of Charity at the age of nineteen and was now sixty, endeavoured to keep the society together, although suppressed by the government; and in the midst of the horrors of that time — when so many nuns and ecclesiastics perished miserably — it appears that the feeling of the people protected these women, and I do not learn that any of them suffered public or personal outrage. As soon as the Consular government was established, the indispensable Sisterhood was recalled by a decree of the Minister of the Interior.

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I cannot resist giving you a few passages from the preamble to this edict — certainly very striking and significant — as I find it quoted in a little book on "Hospitals and Sisterhoods" now before me.

It begins thus: —

"Seeing that the services rendered to the sick can only be properly administered by those whose vocation it is, and who do it in the spirit of love; —

"Seeing, farther, that among the hospitals of the Republic those are in all ways best served wherein the female attendants have adhered to the noble example of their predecessors, whose only object was to practise a boundless love and charity; —

"Seeing that the members still existing of this society are now growing old, so that there is reason to fear that an order which is a glory to the country may shortly become extinct; —

"It is decreed that the Citoyenne Duleau, formerly Superior of the Sisters of Charity, is authorised to educate girls for the care of the hospitals, &c.

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I confess I should like to see an act of our parliament beginning with such a preamble! I confess I should like to see an act of our parliament beginning with a recognition that women do exist as a part of the community, whose responsibilities are to be acknowledged, and whose capabilities are to be made available; not separately, but conjointly with those of men. For that surely must be a defective legislation which takes for granted only the crimes, the vices, the mistakes of humanity, and makes no account of its virtues, its affections, and its capabilities.

Previous to the Revolution, the chief military hospitals and the naval hospitals at Brest, Saint-Malo, and Cherbourg, had been placed under the management of the Sisters of Charity. During the Reign of Terror, those Sisters who refused to quit their habit and religious bond were expelled; but as soon as order was restored they were recalled by the naval and military authorities, and returned to their respective hospitals, where their reappearance was hailed

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with rejoicing and even with tears. At present the naval hospitals at Toulon and Marseilles, in addition to those I have mentioned, are served by these women, acting *with*, as well as *under*, authority.

The whole number of women included in these charitable orders was, in the year 1848, at least, twelve thousand. They seem to have a quite marvellous ubiquity. I have myself met with them not only at Paris, Vienna, Milan, Turin, Genoa, but at Montreal, Quebec, and Detroit; on the confines of civilisation; in Ireland, where cholera and famine were raging. Everywhere, from the uniform dress and a certain similarity in the placid expression and quiet deportment, looking so like each other, that they seemed, whenever I met them, to be but a multiplication of one and the same person. In all the well-trained Sisters of Charity I have known, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, I have found a mingled bravery and tenderness, if not by nature, by habit; and a certain tranquil self-complacency, arising, not from self-applause, but out of that very abne-

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gation of self which had been adopted as the rule of life.*

I have now given you a rapid but most imperfect sketch of what has been done by an organised system of charity in the Roman Catholic church.

I am no friend to nunneries. I do not like even the idea of Protestant nunneries, which I have heard discussed and warmly advocated. I conceive that any large number of women shut up together in one locality, with no occupation connecting them actively and benevolently with the world of humanity outside,

* "A letter from the Piræus, dated the 27th of November, says,—'The cholera is at this moment raging at Athens with great violence. The inhabitants, who had begun to return to the capital, are again flying in all directions. The Sisters of Charity have spontaneously offered to take care of the sick, and the religious prejudices of the country have yielded before the admitted capacity of the Sisterhood in all that concerns the treatment of the sick, and before the gentle influence which they exercise wheresoever they pass.'" (*Times*, Dec. 15, 1854.)

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with all their interests centred within their walls, would not mend each other, and that such an atmosphere could not be perfectly healthy, spiritually, morally, or physically. There would necessarily ensue, in lighter characters, frivolity, idleness, and sick disordered fancies; and in superior minds, ascetic pride, gloom, and impatience. But it is very different with the active orders, and I should certainly like to see amongst us some institutions which, if not exactly like them, should supply their place.

In speaking on the subject with intelligent and experienced men and women, I have generally met with the strongest sympathy; but sometimes also with the vague, sweeping objection, that such communities are quite contrary to the spirit of the Reformed Church, and among Protestants quite impracticable. The worse for us, if it were true; but is it true?

The experiment *has* been tried, an attempt *has* been made, to found such an institution in a Protestant community, though not in this country; it has not yet stood the test of cen-

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turies, but let us see what has been done within a period of thirty years.

At Kaiserswerth on the Rhine, a small town near Dusseldorf, a manufactory had been established during the last war, in which the workmen employed were almost all Protestants. In 1822 the manufacturer became bankrupt, and the workmen were reduced to poverty. Their pastor, Mr. Fliedner, then a very young man, travelled through Holland and England to collect from sympathising friends the necessary funds to support a church in his small parish. In this, we are told, he fully succeeded, and, it is added, "this was the smallest part of the result of his journey." While in England he became acquainted with Mrs. Fry. It was the meeting of two most congenial minds, and his attention was at once turned to the objects which then occupied her. On his return home he originated at Dusseldorf the first society in Germany for the improvement of prison discipline. Experience in prisons pointed out to him some ways of doing good which came with-

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in his then small means. He had been struck with compassion for the desolate condition of women who, when discharged from prison, already depraved by bad habits and without the means of subsistence, "are in a manner *forced* back into crime." With one female criminal, and one voluntary assistant, he founded his penitentiary in a little summer-house in his garden. This was in 1833. In the following year he met with a second volunteer assistant, and collected together nine more penitents, of whom eight had been more than once in prison. This part of the institution, memorable as the first beginning of an establishment, which has since extended to so many and various branches, has always been kept entirely separate from the rest. A general hospital, a lunatic asylum, an orphan asylum, an infant school, became so many seminaries for training hospital nurses, teachers (*i. e.* instructing sisters), and visitors of the poor (called parish deaconesses). On these I do not dwell at present, for we must confine ourselves to the theme in hand. It is the hospital at Kaiserswerth which constitutes the

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most important part of the establishment, and is likely to be the most extensive and permanent in its effects.

In 1836 Mr. Fliedner established his hospital in the deserted manufactory. He had been led to think of it partly from the want of good nurses for the sick; partly from regret, as he said himself, to see "how much good female power was wasted," partly from a perception that the women who had voluntarily come forward to assist him required a larger sphere for the exercise of their faculties. He began, as usual, humbly enough — with one patient and one nurse. Within the first year the number of voluntary nurses was seven and the number of patients received and nursed was sixty, besides twenty-eight nursed at their own houses. The hospital contained in 1854, 120 beds, which were generally full, and more than 6,000 patients have been received since its commencement.

But the chief purpose of this hospital is to serve as a training-school for nursing sisters. Every one who offers herself (and there is no want of offers) is taken on trial for six months,

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during which she must pay for her board and wears no distinctive dress. If she persists in her vocation and is accepted, she undergoes a further probation (like the novitiate of the Roman Catholic Sisters) of from one to three years. She then puts on the hospital dress and is boarded and lodged gratis. The male wards are served by men-nurses, of whom there are five, who have been educated in the hospital and are under the authority of the Sisters. They sleep in the male wards and sit up in case of need. It is added that "the most fastidious could find nothing to object to in the intercourse which takes place between patients, surgeon, and Sisters."

As no inducement is offered to these Protestant Sisters any more than in the Catholic Orders, no prospect of pecuniary reward, or praise or reputation, nothing in short but the opportunity of working for the sake of God and humanity, so, if this does not appear sufficient for them, they are dismissed. After they have been accepted and made their profession, they receive yearly a small sum for clothing, and

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nothing more; they can receive no fee or reward from those they serve, but in age or illness the parent institution is bound to receive and provide for them.

A certain number of these Sisters obtain a particular education to fit them for parish visitors. The absolute necessity that women should be especially trained in order to make good and efficient parish visitors is apparent; for it is wonderfully and often pathetically absurd to see with what a large stock of goodness and conscientious anxiety, and what a small stock of experience, knowledge, and sympathy with their objects, some excellent women set off on their task as lady visitors of the poor. A number of the Sisters, trained properly, have been sent to distant towns and villages, at the request of clergymen and visiting societies. Others are occupied in nursing in private families, their services being repaid to the parent institution. The excellent Mr. Fliedner and his wife still conduct it, and receive their best reward, had they sought any, in the success of their undertaking. There are at present on

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the establishment 190 Sisters, of whom sixty-two are still probationers or learners. Of the Hospital Sisters, eighty are stationed in different hospitals in Germany; five in London; three at Constantinople (they are probably by this time at Scutari); five at Jerusalem; two at Smyrna, and two at Pittsburg in the United States; — making in all, ninety-seven women, properly trained and educated, and fully employed in their beneficent vocation.

Let me add, for it is a matter of interest at present, that Miss Florence Nightingale went through a regular course of training at Kaiserswerth, before she took charge of the Female Sanitarium in London.

In imitation of Mr. Fliedner's establishment, a similar institution for the training of Protestant nurses and teachers has been opened at Paris; another at Strasbourg; another at Berlin, under the especial protection of the Queen of Prussia, and under the direction of the Baroness Rantzau, who had previously gone through a

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complete course of instruction and experience at Kaiserswerth. The number of nursing sisters in the Berlin hospital is twenty-eight, and there are twelve probationers. A similar establishment was founded at Dresden by the late excellent and amiable Countess Alfred Hohenthal (*née* Princess Biron), in which twenty-one women are under a course of instruction. There are besides ten other institutions, which I find described as existing in different localities, but all emanating from the same origin, and containing altogether not less than 429 members. So that it seems no longer a question as to whether, in Protestant communities, a number of women *can* be properly trained and organised for purposes of social benefit, authorised and employed by the Government, aided and directed by intelligent and good men, and sustained by public opinion. I consider that the question has been answered; and I must repeat my strong conviction, that such a communion of labour and of love as I have endeavoured to describe is not a thing of country, creed, or custom, but is founded in

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the very laws of our being;—in that selfsame law which is the basis of domestic life: that it is one of the main conditions of social happiness and morals: and that the neglect of it in any country or community strikes at the heart of all that is best in men and women, increases the faults of both and their ignorance of each other, and tends consequently to the ultimate degradation and misery of all society.*

* For intelligible reasons I have made no reference in this lecture to what has been considered as the particular province of all Sisters of Charity deserving the name,—the management of Penitentiaries and Houses of Refuge for the erring and the fallen of their own sex. I shall merely observe, that there is no department of active benevolence requiring more careful preparation and more especial instruction than this. The treatment of women whose habitual existence has been a perpetual outrage of their nature, *must* be special and exceptional; and I do not think that this is always well understood by the excellent and virtuous ladies who undertake to manage these scarcely manageable creatures. They are thought to be mentally and morally depraved, when in fact it is often the complete derangement of the nervous system, brought on by vice and disease, which produces those changeful moods, those fits of sullenness, excitability, obtuseness, insolence, and desperation by which I

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have seen the most benevolent filled with disgust and the most hopeful with despondency. I believe it to be true that women, even from the superior delicacy of the moral and physical organisation, can be more thoroughly, hopelessly, and constitutionally vitiated than men; this I have often heard used as an argument for rejecting and punishing them when bad, never for protecting and sparing them when good. Such forms of malady in such sacrificed creatures are best treated in the country, by avoiding too much sedentary employment, by active exercise and really hard work in the open air, by talking to them and suffering them to talk as little as possible of themselves, and by gradually opening the mind to religious impressions without exciting resistance or despondency. No mere impulse of pity, no mere power of will, can enable any one to undertake this most difficult mission, which ought to combine the vocation of charity with some of the qualifications of a physician.

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LET us now look at home, and consider what has been done in our own country. Is there any hope, any possibility, of organising into some wise and recognised system the talent and energy, the piety and tenderness of our women for the good of the whole community?

The subject becomes one of awful importance when we consider, that in the last census of 1851, there appears an excess of the female over the male population of Great Britain of more than half a million, the proportion being 104 women to every 100 men. How shall we employ this superfluity of the "feminine element" in society, how turn it to good and useful purposes, instead of allowing it to run to waste? Take of these 500,000 superfluous women only the one-hundredth part, say 5,000 women, who are willing to work for good, to join the communion of labour, under a directing power, if only they knew how—if only they could *learn* how—best to do their work, and if employment were open to them,—what a phalanx it would be if properly organised!

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Everywhere I find the opinion of thoughtful and intelligent men corroborative of my own observations and conclusions. In spite of the adverse feeling of "*that other public*, to which *we*, the sensible reflecting public, are not in the least degree related,"* — in spite of routine and prejudice,—the feeling of those who in the long run will lead opinion, is for us. They say, "In all our national institutions we want the help of women. In our hospitals, prisons, lunatic asylums, workhouses, reformatory schools, elementary schools, — everywhere we want efficient women, and none are to be found prepared or educated for our purpose." The men whom I have heard speak this, seem to regard this infusion of a superior class of working women into our public institutions as a new want, a new expedient. They do not seem to feel, or recognise, the profound truth, that the want now so generally felt and acknowledged, arises out of a great unacknowledged law of the Creator, a law old as creation itself, which

* v. Household Words, vol. xi. No. 254.

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makes the moral health of the community to depend on the co-operation of woman in all work that concerns the well-being of man. For as I have said before, it is not in one or two relations, but in all the possible relations of life, in which men and women are concerned, that they must work together for mutual improvement, and the general good; and I return to the principle laid down at first, "the communion of love and the communion of labour." *

* Since this lecture was delivered I find the following passage in a paper on "Municipal Government," published by the Manchester Statistical Society.

"In carrying out these and various other objects of importance, I am persuaded that the agency of the female sex is necessary, and that without the well organised aid of benevolent and educated women, municipal government will ever remain limited and imperfect. I do not contemplate the formal election of females to municipal offices, although this would appear from 'Grant on Corporations,' not to be without precedent in England, where women, we know, are still, *by Law*, eligible as overseers of the poor, and capable of filling the highest office in the kingdom."

"A number of years ago, in a paper read before this Society, entitled 'Thoughts on the Excess of Adult Females in the Population of Great Britain, with refer-

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"In England," (it has been truly said,) "there are no men to be found systematically

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ence to its Causes and Consequences,' I endeavoured to show that the female sex, in Christian countries, are probably designed for duties more in number and in importance than have yet been assigned them. The reasons were, that above the twentieth year, in all fully-peopled states, whether in Europe or in North America, women considerably out-number the other sex; and that, as this excess is produced by causes which remain in steady operation, we detect therein a natural law, and may allowably infer that it exists for beneficent social ends—ends, amongst others, such as those I am attempting to explain and recommend.

"I own that I cannot but regard the population of our large towns as in a very unsatisfactory state; and feel persuaded that the wisest—the best devised—regulations *enforced by the police alone*, as is the case at present, will not succeed; but I think that a body of educated ladies for each ward, *acting in concert with the legal authorities*," (*that is to say, men and women working together*,) "would be found of wonderful service in detecting radical evils, especially the sources of preventible poverty; or, what is much the same, the various temptations which beset the labourer's family, from bad laws and defective arrangements of different kinds, owing to which the amount of sickness, poverty, immorality, and unhappiness is at all times appallingly great." (*Suggestions for the Improvement of Municipal*

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trained to the moral management of convicts, such as are to be found in Germany and other countries. It is the bane of the English system of government throughout, that it does not render the public service, in its various civil departments, a series of professions, for which men must be specially educated and trained; and the great English universities, in consequence, do not educate young men for any pursuits on earth, except those of a gentleman and a scholar." * In the same manner the education given to our women is merely calculated to render them ornamental and well-informed;

Government in populous Manufacturing Towns, by John Roberton, published in the Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society.—1854)

I do not venture to give any opinion with regard to the "Suggestions" here thrown out in reference to women,—for I have never thought about Municipal Government or the duties of Overseers,—but I extract the above passages as showing the ideas entertained and openly expressed by some experienced and intelligent men.

* Combe "*On the Principles of Criminal Legislation and the Practice of Prison Discipline.*"

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but it does not train them, even those who are so inclined and fitted by nature, to be effective instruments of social improvement. Whether men, without the assistance and sympathetic approval of well-educated women, are likely to improve and elevate the moral tone of society, or work out good in any especial sphere or profession, is, I think, hardly a question.

I believe the employment of well-trained women in the reformatory schools for juvenile delinquents which are to be established under a late act of Parliament, has been already suggested. It is a great advance in opinion that the possible good of such a measure should be spoken of in high quarters. For about ten years, perhaps, the means of carrying it out may be considered and debated; in another ten years, some plan will be proposed; and in another ten years, perhaps, adopted; for that is the usual progress of any great moral movement in "that other public,"—that self-satisfied, unreasoning, cowardly, somnolent public which *we* repudiate; wherein such topics are discussed

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with reference merely to custom and expediency, not to justice and necessity, — with reference to human laws, which can be made and unmade, not with reference to divine laws, immutable principles of life, which cannot be violated or neglected in any social community, without bringing in the elements of demoralisation and decay.

And respecting that movement in favour of the wretched children who so long infested our streets and crammed our gaols, and for whom a long delayed measure of wisdom and justice was obtained last year, may I not be permitted to say how much that cause owed to the unceasing exertions of three admirable women, true sisters of charity, who, to my knowledge, have been occupied in this good work for twenty years? With regard to the first of these ladies, her attention was early called to the subject, and she never ceased to advocate, and, I may say, to agitate the theme. She moved in high society; she was nobly born and connected, eloquent, and clever, and lively; and she made use of all these advantages to promote the

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settled purpose of her mind. She failed in some attempts to execute plans of reform without the legislative sanction, but she was not discouraged. She attacked Home Secretaries, and she plagued magistrates; no M.P. was safe from her, no Minister of State. I have known members of parliament who met her in the street, to cross over to the other side lest they should be captured and beguiled into the promise of their votes. I have heard men in office say, "I dread the very sight of that woman!" She knew it and went on. She saw only her noble object, — she had faith in it, and in herself. Like the woman in Scripture who persecuted the unjust judge, she made herself listened to by her "much speaking," and at length *leavened* the society in which she moved with her own feelings, her own hopes, her own faith. The second lady I refer to was one who carried out into action, and tested by practical experience, and illustrated by published documents, by well-digested facts, and eloquent reasoning, the truths which her sister in beneficence had advocated. Need I name Mary Carpenter — a

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name publicly and inseparably connected with the cause? When called up before a Committee of the House of Commons, her evidence was so clear, so conclusive, and given with such self-possession and precision, as well as feminine feeling, that I have heard those who were present express their admiration,—their conviction that the testimony and the arguments of this excellent woman had, in fact, turned the scale. The third lady I will not name. She brought to the question a noble and powerful intellect; she invested in it a portion of her affections — a part of her very heart; she gave it all the advantages of her character and position; and she had wealth which enabled her to purchase and pay well for the exertions of others, their brains, their pens. When, last year, after more than twenty years had thus passed, the Act of Parliament was obtained (which, however inadequate in some respects, did at least recognise the principle for which they were contending), was there not joy in those three hearts? I know there was. I had no right to share in the triumph, I had done

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nothing; but I could sympathise,—as you do! God forbid that I should seek to lessen the value of the voluntary aid, the indefatigable exertions, the eloquent pleading of those wise and good men who were united in this cause, and at length succeeded in gaining it; but let me say that this was a strong instance of what I mean by the "communion of love and the communion of labour," carried out into social public objects.

It is perfectly notorious that in the reformatory and elementary schools for boys in America, great use is made of female influence and tuition. Women were first resorted to from a scarcity of masters, and the greater cheapness of female labour. What was at first a matter of expediency and necessity, has since become matter of choice, for the experiment has been crowned with success, and has been productive of far more good than was at first contemplated; and I believe that in the Schools or Houses of Detention contemplated here under the new Act of Parliament for young delinquents, the

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teaching and influence of well-trained gentlewomen invested with an official authority, might exercise incalculable good. "I can manage any number of naughty boys," said a lady who is celebrated among us as a Protestant Sister of Charity on a large scale, "no matter how wicked and mutinous. I *feel* that I have the power to subdue them; but I confess I have great difficulty with girls,—I do not know why." The cause, if we looked to Nature and her wise adaptations, would not be far to seek.

With regard to the employment of women in the lunatic asylums, I can only say that I have the testimony of men of large experience that feminine aid, influence, presence, would in many cases be most beneficial in the male wards.* Of course there are certain cases in

* Of the Salpêtrière, Howard says, that, at the time of his visit (1776), the whole house "was kept clean and quiet by the great attention of the religious women who served it; but it was terribly crowded, containing more than 5000 poor, sick, and insane persons."

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which it would be dangerous, inadmissible; but it is their opinion that in most cases it would have a soothing, sanitary, harmonising effect. In reference to this subject let me mention a lady with whom I have the honour to be personally acquainted. She is a native of the United States, and has given her attention for many years to the management of the insane, and the improvement of mad-houses. She has travelled alone through every part of the United States — from New York to Chicago, from New Orleans to Quebec. She has been the means of founding nineteen new asylums, and improving and enlarging a greater number. She has won those in power to listen to her, and is considered in her own country a first-rate authority on such subjects, just as

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Again :—"Here (at Ghent) is a foundation belonging to the Béguines for the reception of twelve men who are insane, and for sick and aged women. The insane have, when requisite, assistance from their own sex; and the tenderness with which both these and the poor women are treated by the Sisters, gave me no little pleasure." (Howard on Prisons, p. 145.)

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Mrs. Fry was here in regard to prisons, Mrs. Chisholm in regard to emigration, and Miss Carpenter in regard to juvenile criminals. As to the use of trained women in lunatic asylums, I will say no more at present, but throw it out as a suggestion to be dealt with by physiologists, and entrusted to *time*.

With reference to the employment of women as a higher order of nurses in hospitals, late events might almost render it superfluous to speak at all, but that it is important to my present theme to look back to the history of public opinion on this subject.

I find that more than thirty years ago — long before the institution at Kaiserswerth existed or was thought of — the late Dr. Gooch entertained the idea of establishing in this country some institution analogous to that of the Sisters of Charity. Dr. Gooch is to this day a great medical authority as a physician; he was also a philanthropist and a philosopher. During a

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tour in Belgium he had been struck — as all are struck — by the institution of the Béguines, their well-ordered hospitals, and their general efficiency in visiting and prescribing for the sick poor. He corresponded with Southey on this subject, and at the end of the second volume of Southey's "Colloquies" may be found the ideas he had brought from the Netherlands and communicated to his friend: also two letters published in the 'Medical Gazette,' and signed "A Country Surgeon," which are now known to have been written by Dr. Gooch. There is also a most eloquent exposition of Southey's own opinions, holding up to us the example of the Béguines and the Sisters of Charity; and, which is curious, he seems to have put his trust in Quakerism rather than in our own Church, (the church which he so devoutly admired and defended;) and he even hoped that Mrs. Opie would do for our hospitals what Mrs. Fry had done for our prisons. But he mistook the character of Mrs. Opie: it was *not* the vocation of that amiable and gifted woman.

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You must permit me to read one or two passages from these letters written by Dr. Gooch in 1825, because of their beauty, and because of their good sense. He begins by describing at length the appearance and manners of the Sisters of Charity in France and Belgium; their respectable, kindly appearance; their peculiar yet appropriate dress; the care, the tenderness, the skill with which they attended on the sick. He then adds:—

"Let all real Christians join and found an order of women like the Sisters of Charity in Catholic countries: let them be selected for good plain sense, kindness of disposition, indefatigable industry, and deep piety; let them receive—not a technical and scientific—but a practical medical education. For this purpose let them be placed both as nurses and pupils in the hospitals of Edinburgh and London, or in the county hospitals; let their attention be pointed by the attending physicians to the particular symptoms by which he distinguishes the disease; let them be made as familiar with the

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best remedies (which are always few) as they are with barley-water, gruel, and beef-tea; let them learn the rules by which these remedies are to be employed; let them be examined frequently on these subjects, in order to see that they carry these rules clearly in their heads; let books be framed for them containing the essential rules of practice,—briefly, clearly, and untechnically written. Let such women, thus educated, be distributed among the country parishes of the kingdom, and be maintained by parish allowance, which now goes to the parish surgeon, who should be resorted to only in difficult cases; let them be examined every half year by competent physicians about the state of their medical knowledge. Let this be done, and I fearlessly predict that my friend, and all those who are similarly situated and zealous with himself, will no longer complain that their sick flock suffer from medical neglect.

"It may be objected that women with such an education would form a bad substitute for a

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scientific medical attendance. Be it remembered, however, that the choice is not between such women and a profound and perfect physician or surgeon (if there is such a person), but between such women and the ordinary run of country apothecaries; the latter labouring under the additional disadvantage of wanting time for the application of what skill they have."

I must quote one more passage:—

"Many will think that it is impossible to impart a useful knowledge of medicine to women who are ignorant of anatomy, physiology, and pathology. A profound knowledge, of course, would not, but a very useful degree of it might: a degree which, combined with kindness and assiduity, would be far superior to that which the country poor receive at present. I have known matrons and sisters of hospitals with more practical tact in the detection and treatment of disease than half the young surgeons by whom the country poor are commonly attended."

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These were the words of an eminent practical physician thirty years ago. No result followed,—scarcely was public attention wakened to the subject; the writer went down to his last rest with a favourite idea unaccomplished; but heaven and earth shall pass away before one particle of that truth which has emanated from the benevolent and trusting faithful spirit shall fail and perish.

The feeling with which the expedition of the lady-nurses to the East was regarded by the lower order of medical men was exhibited in many ways not very creditable. It reminded me of what had taken place some ten or twelve years ago when the female School of Design was first projected; when a petition was drawn up and handed round for signature by a certain set of artists and engravers, praying that the women might not be taught at the expense of government "arts which would interfere with the employment of men, and take the bread out of their mouths." The men who signed and circulated this precious document were not

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wicked or bad-hearted. I dare say they meant well. They only took that selfish, one-sided view of the subject natural in persons who had been ill-educated, and were totally ignorant of the bearings of any large moral or social question. Of the obvious benefit such an institution might afford to their daughters or sisters, thus lightening the burthen on men with large families, they did not think; — far less on the right of every human being to the due cultivation and exercise of every good gift "that cometh from above." Had their views been listened to, how many hundreds of young women who are now maintaining themselves or helping their families, would be perishing on the streets, in prisons, in workhouses! And who would have been the better? Of the artists who signed that petition some are dead, and some whom I know would not like to be reminded of their share in it — are indeed thoroughly ashamed of it. I believe that if among medical men a petition were now handed round for signature, praying that women should not be taught at the expense of government the physical and moral

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conditions of health, the symptoms of disease, the preparation of the best remedies and the rules for administering them, lest they should "interfere with the employments of men, and take the bread out of their mouths," — I am afraid there are well-intentioned and well-educated men who would at this time be induced to sign such a paper; but I believe that twenty — even ten — years hence, they would look back upon their signatures and the whole transaction with as much disgust and amazement as is now excited by the exploded attempt to crush and sneer down the female School at Marlborough House.

As I have said—no immediate result followed upon the suggestions of Dr. Gooch; but the good thus sown only slept, like the seed in wintry ground.

A few years ago, several intelligent and benevolent persons, men and women, who had had opportunities of studying the management of the institution at Kaiserswerth, conceived the idea that a similar institution, for similar

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purposes, might be founded in England, and that both our government and our clergy would be induced to co-operate in such a plan, if once public interest could be excited in its favour. It was admitted on all sides that the general management of our hospitals and charitable institutions exhibited the want of female aid, such as exists in the hospitals abroad,—the want of a moral, religious, intelligent, sympathising influence, combined with the physical cares of a common nurse. Some inquiry was made into the general character of hospital nurses, and the qualifications desired; and what were these qualifications? Obedience, presence of mind, cheerfulness, sobriety, patience, forbearance, judgment, kindness of heart, a light delicate hand, a gentle voice, a quick eye; — these were the qualities enumerated as not merely desirable, but necessary, in a good and efficient nurse — a long list of virtues not easily to be purchased for 14*l.* 10*s.* a year! qualifications, indeed, which in their union would form an admirable woman in any class of life, and fit her for any sphere of duty, from the highest to the lowest.

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In general, however, the requirements of our medical men are much more limited; they consider themselves fortunate if they can ensure obedience and sobriety even, without education, tenderness, intelligence, religious feeling, or any high principle of duty. On the whole, the testimony brought before us is sickening. Drunkenness, profligacy, violence of temper, horribly coarse and brutal language,—these are common. We know that there are admirable exceptions, more particularly in the great London Hospitals; and the spectacle of devoted charity exhibited by the officials in the Middlesex Hospital during the late visitation of the cholera must be fresh in the memory of those whom I address. Still, the reverse of the picture is more generally true. The toil is great, the duties disgusting, the pecuniary remuneration small in comparison; so that there is nothing to invite the co-operation of a better class of women, but the highest motives which can influence a true Christian. At one moment the selfishness and irritability of the sufferers require a strong control; at another time their

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dejection and bodily weakness require the utmost tenderness, sympathy, and judgment. To rebuke the self-righteous, to bind up the broken-hearted, to strengthen, to comfort the feeble, to drop the words of peace into the disturbed or softened mind just at the right moment;—there are few nurses who could be entrusted with such a charge, or be brought to regard it as a part of their duty: while the "overworked chaplain," as he is called, in some of the evidence before me, cannot suffice for all, and pays his visits only at stated times, unless urgently called for.

It was from a consideration of these and other evils, and a comparison of our system with that of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Sisterhoods abroad, that a paper was drawn up and sent round to a number of chaplains, medical men, and governors of hospitals, containing a sketch of the training system adopted in the institutions at Kaiserswerth and elsewhere, and inquiries as to the best means of raising the moral character of hospital nurses by substituting women of a

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better class, properly instructed. and capable of being at once the delegates of the medical men, the assistants of the chaplain, the comfort, blessing, and support of the poor sufferers to whom they minister.

The answers which this circular elicited, twenty-three in number, are given at length in the little book already referred to*, and very curiously characteristic they are of the state of feeling and opinion on a most important subject. They are too long to be read here; but, however differing in views and in character, the writers agree almost without exception in two things, — in allowing the evils complained of even to their utmost extent, and in their despair of any remedy.

These letters were published, but no result followed. The so-called practical men, clergy and laity, admired the project, praised the amiable enthusiasts who advocated it, and shook their wise heads, just as they had formerly

* Hospitals and Sisterhoods.

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shaken them over theories of education and plans of juvenile reform.

When Admiral Sir Edward Parry was at the head of the naval hospital at Haslar, the necessity for a better order of nurses for his sick men was forced on his attention. Perhaps he had heard of the employment of the Sisters of Charity in the naval hospitals of France; at all events, the hope of procuring nurses of a similar character induced him to draw up a sort of appeal, in which he adverted to the *impossibility* of obtaining any attendance for the hospital inmates, but such as was of the lowest grade—such as only "the most absolute necessity would justify his admitting into the establishment." The result was, incalculable evil to the men; who, instead of being elevated and softened by suffering and seclusion, were morally lowered and hardened by contact with coarse and immoral women, even at the very moment when all that was best and manliest within them ought to have been wakened up and appealed to; and most earnestly he solicited

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the aid of all good Christians to induce three or four respectable women to volunteer their services and to undergo an especial training, such as had been adopted at Kaiserswerth; then to superintend others, and thus to help him in his earnest endeavour to raise the moral tone of one of the most important of our national hospitals. The paper was signed by five medical officers, and circulated extensively. It did not elicit a single offer. "I confess," said Sir Edward, commenting with some sadness on his complete failure, "I have never been able to arrive at any definite or satisfactory conclusion as to the best mode of meeting the requirements of a Protestant community."*

Let us contrast this with Kaiserswerth, — a Protestant institution, be it remembered. An appeal being made in 1853, that more voluntary nurses were wanting in the hospitals, it was answered by 150 applicants, of whom 70 were accepted and put under a course of instruction.

* "Hospitals and Sisterhoods," p. 41.

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One fact more. The Bishop of London publicly expressed his regrets that he had seen, one after another, all the plans for this object fail utterly. As to the reason for it, he seemed as much at a loss as Sir Edward Parry.

It would have been said, in truth, but a few weeks ago, that no cause *could* be more hopeless, than that which I am now advocating. The obstacle seemed to consist, not in the want of charity, but in the want of moral courage and the most obtuse ignorance. Opinions are believed in simply because they are echoed round us. The conscience is trained to obey the pressure of an exterior force, rather than trust to the promptings of an internal impulse; and the convictions and the will of a generous and powerful individual nature sink into inertness for want of self-reliance. How many women, widows and unmarried of a certain age, would have gladly responded to the appeal from Haslar Hospital, if ignorance, timidity, a defective education, and a terror of the vulgar, stupid prejudices around them

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—chiefly, I am ashamed to say, masculine prejudices — had not stifled their natural feelings and trammelled their natural energies! True, hundreds of women had done the same thing before; but then those were Nuns and Roman Catholics — words of fear! — precedents to be repudiated! — snares forged by Satan himself in guise of philanthropy! Thus the women had no moral courage for themselves. On the part of the men — (and no combined efforts of women can possibly succeed or come to good without the co-operation and guidance of men) — there was an absurd horror of all innovation; want of confidence in the material to be employed; want of talent and influence to organise it.

Every one admitted, as a natural law, an undeniable truth, that early education and the nursing of the sick belong especially to the women. Every one admitted the great, the almost insuperable difficulty of finding women competent to educate, or competent to nurse. To furnish them with the means of acquiring

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skill and competency in their own department of work did not seem to be the duty, the business, the interest of our pastors and masters; while, with a strange injustice, the want of such skill and competency has been a perpetual source of complaint and ridicule. The education commonly given to a boy makes him, at least, a brave man; a man who can fight till he falls. Does the education given to a woman make her a brave woman? Yet how every man feels the value of those words, "A brave woman!"—a woman who knows how to act in difficulties, how to endure in suffering, and can speak the truth without fear and without disguise. A woman should be a brave woman who aspires to please a brave man!

Whatsoever things are good, whatsoever things are wise, whatsoever things are holy, must be accomplished by communion between brave men and brave women. The work must be shared between them, or it will perish and fail utterly. Yet up to this moment you will find

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men and women working separately. You will observe that all legislation takes for granted that men and women are to be an everlasting cause of mutual mischief wherever combined; and always *supposes* an antagonistic position if they are separated. The most humane and recent laws aspire no farther than to defend the women from being beaten to death, and this because all legislation is derived from the old Pagan law, or the old monkish prejudices. These barbarous, and stupid, and irreligious notions have caused the evil they supposed, and incalculable has been the amount of sin and misery springing from them.

Not for ever, certainly—but for how long a period, who can tell?—such miserable obstacles might have continued to limit, to perplex, to paralyse the aspirations of the wise and benevolent, if a crisis had not come, and if that crisis had not found among us a man with sufficient faith and courage to break down the barriers of routine; and a woman generous and gentle, and gifted with sufficient energy to act

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out "the plan which pleased her childish thought,"* and prepared, by education and habit, as well as by a rare combination of the sympathetic and administrative faculties, to do so. Nothing could more strongly exhibit the perplexed state of feeling and opinion in this country on some momentous points than the manner in which Mr. Sidney Herbert's proposal to send off a staff of voluntary female nurses to our hospitals in the East, and Miss Nightingale's consent to place herself at the head of them, were received by the people, and commented on by the newspapers. There was, indeed, a genuine spontaneous burst of admiration from the public heart, mixed up, however, with fear, with incredulity, with amazement, as if it were a thing unheard of, unknown, and now for the first time attempted, that women of refined habits, and holding a certain position in society, should, from motives of piety and

* "It is the generous spirit, who when brought
Among the tasks of real life hath wrought
Upon the plan which pleased his childish thought."
Wordsworth.

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humanity, become nurses in an hospital.* "Common-sense" styled them *romantic*, a con-

* "When, at the commencement of the war, the practice of the French to employ female nurses in their hospitals was spoken of, the opinion of the medical men and of the medical department was given against the employment of female nurses. I did not feel myself at liberty to act at variance with that opinion and the experience on which it was founded, although I now feel that that experience was based upon a totally different state of things, and that those opinions were formed upon circumstances which did not resemble the present. The reason why in former times nurses were found unsuited to the care of English soldiers was because the women selected for that service were not, as now, women of education and of pious feelings, who volunteered their services, but women hired for the service, who, both abroad and at home, grew callous, and manifested a harshness and want of sympathy with the sufferers that rendered them unfit for the due performance of their duties. But hardly any other ladies had given a fairer trial to the present system than the one who has so nobly volunteered to go to the hospital at Scutari. I believe that the names of Miss Nightingale and of those ladies who have so nobly stepped forward in the cause of Christian love will be handed down to posterity in company with those of the gallant men who have been wounded in the service of their country. They have left a comfortable and in many instances a luxurious home, for the purpose of adopting a profes-

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venient epithet, by which the worldly-minded set the seal of reprobation on anything which steps beyond the bounds of conventionalism — as if all that is really great and good in humanity were to be kept for fiction and poetry, and only its futilities and frivolities acted out into realities! And "sentiment," with that squeamishness in regard to manners and latitude in regard to morals which characterise certain classes of society, stigmatised the whole arrangement as "unfeminine," — another word of most convenient misapplication. The hopeful and the liberal-minded were troubled by a vision of a hundred enthusiastic sentimental women rushing

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sion which is most distasteful to many women of delicate minds, in the hope of assuaging the sufferings of our gallant fellows and of fulfilling a Christian duty. I believe that through the instrumentality of these ladies more will be done to re-establish the efficiency of our hospital establishments than has ever been done by the medical men themselves, although there never have been greater exertions, greater self-denial, or greater zeal, shown by the members of that profession." (*Speech of the Duke of Newcastle, Dec.* 12. 1854.)

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off to Scutari, and on their arrival there falling into hysterics;—of "hard-headed Scotch surgeons," wrathfully aghast at the invasion of their domains by impertinent femalities. Then there was the mockery of the light-minded; the atrocious innuendo of the dissolute; the sneer of the ignorant; the scepticism of the cold. I have seen men, who deem it quite a natural and necessary thing that a woman—*some* women at least,—should lead the life of a courtezan, put on a look of offended propriety at the idea of a woman nursing a sick soldier. I have seen men, aye, and women too, who deem it a matter of course that our streets should be haunted by contagious vice, disgusted by the idea of women turning apothecaries and hospitalières. And worse than all, I have heard men and women too, who acknowledge the teaching of Christ, who call themselves by his name, who believe in his mission of mercy, disputing about the exact shade of orthodoxy in a woman who had offered up every faculty of her being at the feet of her Redeemer!

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On the other hand, people were heard congratulating each other on "the lucky chance" that a Miss Nightingale should have been forthcoming just at the moment she was wanted. Suppose there had been no Miss Nightingale at once willing to do the work—no woman in a position which gave her social influence to overcome the obstacles of custom and prejudice,—suppose that the example of noble courage and devotion which led the way for others had been wanting,—is every crisis of danger, distress, and difficulty involving human life, human suffering, human interests of the deepest consequence, to find us at the mercy of "a lucky chance?" at the mercy of people who have never thought seriously on any great question, or taken the trouble to make up their minds one way or another? I trust that England has many daughters not unworthy of being named with Florence Nightingale; as quick in sympathy, as calm in judgment, as firm in duty, as awake to charity; but the ability, the acquirements, the experience, the tact, the skill in judging and managing character, and overcom-

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ing adverse circumstances, at which ministers and officials were filled with wonder,—were these matters of chance? They were the result of years of study, of patient observation, of severe training. In what school? In none that England affords to her daughters; *this* is the wonder!

Even in the applause — the sort of glorification — which has followed on the success of this experiment, there has been something to sadden and humiliate a thinking and feeling mind. There has been perpetual reiteration of *astonishment* at the magnanimity of those who had quitted a comfortable, and in some cases a luxurious home, and all the pleasures of a refined and intellectual existence, "to assuage the sufferings of our gallant countrymen, and to perform a sacred and sublime duty;" as if to assuage suffering and prefer a sacred and sublime duty to the temptations of leisure or pleasure, were not the woman's province and privilege as well as the man's; as if the same thing had never been done before in past times and

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other creeds; as if in these present times we had not known women who in the midst of all the splendour of a luxurious home have perished by a slow wasting disease of body and mind, because they had nothing to do — no sphere of activity commensurate with the large mental powers or passionate energy of character with which God had endowed them. Send such a woman to her piano, her books, her cross-stitch; she answers you with *despair!* — But send her on some mission of mercy, send her where she may perhaps die by inches in achieving good for others, and the whole spirit rises up strong and rejoicing.*

* One of the ladies at Scutari, rich, well-born, and accomplished, on being informed that she had been selected as one of those who were to be sent to a post where additional difficulty, suffering, and even danger awaited her, clasped her hands and uttered a fervent "Thank God!"

I remember a Sister of Charity who had been sent off at half an hour's notice to a district where the cholera was raging among the most squalid and miserable poor, and I never shall forget the look of radiant happiness and thankfulness on that face.

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I am anxious on this point not to be misunderstood. If you speak to some people of the necessity of finding better and higher employment for women, they inquire merrily how you would like a female house of parliament? or they congratulate themselves that ladies are not likely to act as constables or to be drawn for the militia. Thus they would put down one of the most terribly momentous questions that has ever occupied the thoughts of thoughtful men — a question which is at the very core of social morals: but none who now listen to me would, I think, condescend to such cruel and absurd wit.

Then again an intelligent and amiable man will say: — "It is all very well; but I should not like my daughter to do so-and-so." But the question is not what this or that individual would choose his daughter to do. It remains with him to settle this within the precincts of his family; only it is most unjust to make his particular feelings and opinions the rule of life for others, without once approaching

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the question as one of social morals, as one of justice and humanity, without once reflecting that all the unemployed and superfluous women in England cannot be sempstresses, governesses, and artists. Why is it that we see so many women carefully educated going over to the Roman Catholic Church? For no other reason but for the power it gives them to throw their energies into a sphere of definite utility under the control of a high religious responsibility. What has been done by our sisters of the Roman Catholic Church, can it not be accomplished in a religion which does not aim to subjugate, but to direct the will? What has been done under the hardest despotisms, and recognised in the midst of the wildest excesses of democracy, can it not be done under a political system which disdains to use the best and highest faculties of our nature in a spirit of calculation, in furtherance of the purposes of a hierarchy or an oligarchy, which boasts its equal laws and equal rights, and is at this moment ruled by a gentle-hearted noble-minded woman?

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With regard to this present experiment (if that can be called an experiment which the experience of a thousand years had established as a principle), it seems to have succeeded beyond all hope, and its success has demonstrated the deep-lying wisdom of what was at first a mere expedient adopted for a passing difficulty. Henceforth the name of Florence Nightingale is dear and familiar in our households—women glory in her, men rise up and call her blessed. "I have received," said Mr. Sidney Herbert, speaking from his place in Parliament, "not only from medical men, but from many others who have had an opportunity of making observations, letters couched in the highest possible terms of praise. I will not repeat the words, but no higher words of praise could be applied to women, for the wonderful energy, the wonderful tact, the wonderful tenderness, combined with the extraordinary self-devotion which have been displayed by Miss Nightingale; and I am glad to say that the characteristics which have been shown by that lady, the force and influ-

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ence of her character, seem to have penetrated all those working with her, and I believe, not only the patients themselves, but every person connected with the hospital, will be benefited by the admixture of this new element in the management of a military hospital." It will extend yet farther, as I hope and believe, to results incalculable and not certainly contemplated, when that band of sisters, accompanied by tears, prayers, and blessings, departed from our shores to the far East. We are told of the burst of gratitude with which they were received. "Now we know that our country cares for us!" was the exclamation of one of the poor fellows. I do not think it right to tell here all I *could* tell on the subject of these excellent and high-hearted women, all the difficulties they have had to contend with and have surmounted, all the feelings they have awakened of gratitude and veneration; of death-beds comforted and hallowed, of wandering and distempered spirits recalled and healed — no — I cannot; it is all too sacred and too present to us to be spoken of yet; — nor should

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I feel justified in repeating what has been privately and confidentially communicated. What has been published in the newspapers has probably been read and re-read with hearts burning within them, by every one now listening to me; — but one or two passages in reference to the general good effected, I may be allowed to cite.

Mr. Stafford, in his attack on the late ministry, made at least one especial exception to their misdeeds — on one point he gave to Mr. Sidney Herbert most deserved praise. "He congratulated the Secretary at War on the sending out of the female nurses last autumn. Success more complete had never attended human efforts, than that which had resulted from this excellent measure. They could scarcely realise, without personally seeing it, the heartfelt gratitude of the soldiers to these noble ladies, or the amount of misery they had relieved, or the degree of comfort — he might say of joy—they had diffused; and it was impossible to do justice, not only to

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the kindness of heart, but to the clever judgment, ready intelligence, and experience displayed by the distinguished lady to whom this difficult mission had been intrusted. If Scutari was not altogether as we could wish it to be, it was because of the inadequate powers confided to Miss Nightingale; and if the Government did not stand by her and her devoted band, and repel unfounded and ungenerous attacks made upon them—if it did not consult their wishes and yield to their superior judgment in many respects—it would deserve the execration of the public." Strong language this! but excusable from one who spoke with glowing heart of what he had seen;—listened to with sympathy, and responded to with cheers by generous men and gentlemen.

Another speaker on the same side expresses his belief that even the mere presence and superintendence of gentle well-educated women would be morally beneficial. I recollect that it was said at first, that not only the medical attendants but the sick and suffering

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would be quite uncomfortably "embarrassed" by this innovation; but if a cessation of coarse language, if better feelings, if more self-control, arise from patients and orderlies being "embarrassed" by the presence and ministration of superior women, I conceive that it will not be an evil but a benefit, and one that will not, in all cases, cease with the hour of suffering. We may at least hope that a man who has been thus tended by gentle and superior beings of the other sex, will hardly be so ready as heretofore to make women the victims of his levity or brutality; what he did not spare for the sake of mother or sister, he may perhaps, in some hour of temptation and selfish impulse, spare for the sake of those who bent over him when "pain and anguish wrung the brow," and whispered low the solemn words of peace, of patience, of divine hope and comfort, while laying the pillow under a poor fellow's rough head, or holding the cup to his parched lips. As woman, even because she *is* woman, feels all the healing and strengthening power which lies in the man's

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mind, and in cases of severe physical or moral suffering, throws herself with almost helpless confidence on her priest or her physician — so it is with man:—he softens under the influence of a softer nature, he confesses a healing power in the organism which was created thus to refresh, restore, and purify his own, and yields to woman where he would not yield to one of his own sex. This I believe to be a simple universal physiological law, not yet recognised in all its bearings. To borrow a happy illustration from Mr. Macaulay—he asks, somewhere, "In how many months would the first human beings who settled on the shores of the ocean have been justified in believing that the moon had an influence on the tides?" and I may ask, for how many more centuries shall we stand on the shores of the great ocean of life without knowing under what near or remote mysterious influences its floods rise or fall, are moved to disturbance or hushed to tranquillity?

I am acquainted with an army surgeon whose regiment, a few years since, was ordered

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to India. Almost immediately on landing, numbers of the men were attacked by cholera. They were prostrated one after another — sank — died, almost as much from terror and despair as from the disease itself. As the senior surgeon, my friend felt deeply his responsibility — as a humane man he felt for the suffering of his men. He had exhausted all the resources of his art, but the disease was spreading fearfully. One morning, on coming home to his wife, after visiting the hospital, he said, "I don't know what to do with my poor fellows — they wring my very heart — they are dying of faint-heartedness as much as anything else!" "Suppose," said she, "I were to go and see them—would it do any good?" "Well," he replied, with tears in his eyes, "I should not have asked it of you, but, as you offer it, I think it *would* do good." She threw on her dressing-gown, and repaired at once to the hospital. Leaning on her husband's arm, she walked through the wards where the sick and dying lay crowded together; — she spoke kind and cheerful words to those who could hear her,

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and they seemed to revive under the influence of her presence. She continued her visits daily. The most despairing took comfort, men whose condition seemed hopeless recovered. They thought, they even said, "It is not so bad with us if *she* can come among us!" They watched for her coming, and received her, when she came, with blessings: and the progress of the disease was from that time allayed. Now there is nothing extraordinary in all this; hundreds of such instances might be recorded; some example of the kind will probably start into the recollection of many who listen to me; but such facts have never been brought together, and considered in the abstract as illustrating a principle, or as substantiating a truth — a most important principle, a most vital truth; they remain, consequently, isolated facts, strongly exciting our sympathy and interest; and nothing more.

I have met with Protestant Sisters of Charity — very many — who did not assume that name for themselves. I will mention one instance.

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She was a lady, a foreigner not merely of good birth, but of high and titled rank. She had begun life in a court; she had been *dame d'honneur* to a brilliant princess. Certain events, on which I have no right to dwell, clouded her youth and gave her the wish to devote herself wholly to the service of the wretched. She consulted a well-known physician, who looked upon her resolve as a mere fit of excitement, and reasoned strongly against it. Finding this in vain, he thought to shock her delicate nerves by assigning to her at first some of the most trying, most revolting duties of an hospital. The effect was the reverse of what he had expected. The near spectacle of suffering which she had power to aid and alleviate, the perception of certain evils she might have the power to reform or at least ameliorate, only made her more resolved, and she quietly took her vocation upon her and pursued it steadily. The first time I saw this lady she was seated in the garden of a mutual friend. It was a beautiful summer evening; she had finished her day's work, and her later duties had not commenced.

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She was sitting on a bench knitting, with a cup of coffee beside her, dressed with great simplicity, but without peculiarity; her face was grave, but when she looked up to speak it brightened into a ready smile. She had at that time pursued her vocation, unfaltering in courage and perseverance, for sixteen years; she had introduced, as I was told, many salutary reforms into the hospitals she had attended, and exercised wherever she went a beneficent influence.

Mr. Sidney Herbert, in requesting the assistance of Miss Nightingale, after using some arguments drawn even from that task "full of horror" to which he invited her,—arguments which no woman at once capable and tender-hearted could have resisted,—alludes to more remote but probable results following on her conduct. He says truly:—"If this succeed, an enormous amount of good will be done now, and to persons deserving everything at our hands; and a prejudice will be broken through and a precedent

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established which will multiply the good to all time."

No doubt; but it will be through the patience, faith, and wisdom of men and women working together. In an undertaking so wholly new to our English customs, so at variance with the usual education given to women in this country, we shall meet with perplexities, difficulties, even failures. All the ladies who have gone to Scutari may not turn out heroines. There may be vain babblings and scribblings and indiscretions, such as may put weapons into adverse hands. Still let us trust that a *principle* will be recognised in this country which will not be again lost sight of. It will be the true, the lasting glory of Florence Nightingale and her band of devoted assistants, that they have broken through what Goethe calls a "Chinese wall of prejudices;" prejudices religious, social, professional; and established a precedent which will indeed "multiply the good to all time." No doubt there are hundreds of women who would now gladly seize the privileges held out

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to them by such an example, and crowd to offer their services: but would they pay the price for such dear and high privileges? Would they fit themselves daily for the performance of such services, and earn, by distasteful and even painful studies, the necessary certificates for skill and capacity? Would they, like Miss Nightingale, go through a seven years' probation, to try at once the steadiness of their motives and the steadiness of their nerves? Such a trial is absolutely necessary, for hundreds of women will fall into the common error of mistaking an impulse for a vocation. But I do believe that there are also hundreds who are fitted, or would gladly, at any self-sacrifice, fit themselves, for the work, if the means of doing so were allowed to them. At present an English lady has no facilities whatever for obtaining the information or experience required; no such institutions are open to her, and yet she is ridiculed for presenting herself without the competent knowledge! This seems hardly just.

The horrors of war which have called forth

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so noble a display of the best capabilities of women, are accidents in the world's history; but the capabilities so called forth are not accidental, nor will they cease with the occasion. They are intrinsic and essential and ever at hand, though hidden under a mass of cruel conventionalities, like those precious drugs and medicaments, which, as we are told, were stowed away under heaps of shell, shot, and gunpowder. Having once discovered their treasures, men have now to use them. War will cease, but here at home the need of women's active intelligence and tenderness to alleviate a mass of social evils will not cease. The time is surely coming when we shall know how to apply such material better than we have yet done. The time is surely coming when private charity will not be so often desultory, capricious, misdirected, meddlesome, and unwelcome; when public charity will not be worked like a steam power, through mere official mechanism, but by human sympathies, cheerful, wise, and, tender. The contributions poured into the magistrates' poor-box on every public appeal, the distribu-

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tion of blankets and flannels, and soup, and all creature comforts, are in themselves things excellent and seasonable, and worthy of all imitation, but should this be the only intercourse between those who give and those who want?—those who pity and those who suffer? The love that works for our good should elicit love in return, or it is nothing but a machine. Such is not God's love to us, whose highest benefit it is that it awakens our responsive love for him, and makes us better through that love. Should we not also endeavour to make our fellow-creatures better through our charity, to touch the nature and make it respond to our own, till there shall be more of mutual faith and comprehension, as well as a more diffused sympathy through the different orders of society?

An institution such as I have in my mind, should be a place where women could obtain a sort of professional education under professors of the other sex,—for men are the best instructors

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of women;—where they might be trained as hospital and village nurses, visitors of the poor, and teachers in the elementary and reformatory schools; so that a certain number of women should always be found ready and competent to undertake such work in our public, charitable, and educational institutions as should be fitted for them;—I say *fitted* for them, and for which by individual capacity and inclination they should be *fitted*, and that corresponding fitness tested by a rather lengthened probation and a strict examination. It seems rather unjust to sneer at a woman's unfitness for certain high duties, domestic and social, unless the possibility of obtaining better instruction be afforded. All the unmarried and widowed women of the working classes cannot be sempstresses and governesses; nor can all the unmarried women of the higher classes find in society and visiting, literature and art, the purpose, end, and aim of their existence. We have works of love and mercy for the best of our women to do, in our prisons and hospitals, our reformatory schools,

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and I will add our workhouses *; but then we must have them such as we want them,—not

* "A principal reason of the cleanliness and order of the workhouses in Holland, is the attention and humanity of the governesses, for each house has four, who take charge of the inspection, and have their names painted in the room." (*Howard on Prisons*, 3rd edit. 1784, p. 48.)

"The workhouses at Amsterdam were under the direction of six regents (governors) and four governesses, who appointed under them two 'fathers,' and two 'mothers,' (overseers), whose business it was to superintend the work, diet, and lodging of the inmates," &c. (p. 59.)

"The regents (*i. e.*, governors of the houses of correction), have a room in which they assemble once a fortnight. Their ladies assemble in another room to give directions concerning the week's linen, provisions, &c.

"They (the governesses), also attend by rotation at dinner and at other times, and their accounts are carried to the regents."

In these days the *order* and *cleanliness* which Howard so admired are not wanting in our workhouses; but some elements *are* wanting, such as judicious and refined and truly religious and kind-hearted women would alone supply.

[Since the above note was written I have received a

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impelled by transient feelings but by deep abiding motives,—not amateur *ladies* of charity, but brave women, whose vocation is fixed and whose faculties of every kind have been trained and disciplined to their work under competent instruction from men, and tested by a long probation.

It will be said, perhaps, that when you thus train a woman's instinctive feelings of pity and tenderness for a particular purpose, to act under control and in concert with others, you take away their spontaneousness, their grace, even in some sort their sincerity; consequently their power to work good. This is like the reasoning of my Uncle Toby, who, in describing the Béguines, says, "They visit and take care of the sick by profession; but I had rather, for my own part, that they did it out of good nature." Would Uncle

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very benevolent and sensible letter on the subject of female supervision in workhouses, which I am sorry I cannot insert here.]

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Toby have admitted the necessary inference — namely, that when you train and discipline a man to be a soldier, to serve in the ranks, and obey orders under pain of being shot, you take away his valour, his manly strength, his power to use his weapon? We know it is not so. Never yet did the sense of duty diminish the force of one generous impulse in man or woman!—that sublimest of bonds, when in harmony with our true instincts, intensifies while it directs them.

There are many other objections and obstacles, lying in our onward path, of which I cannot dissemble the magnitude. There is in this country a sort of scrupulousness about interfering with the individual will, which renders it peculiarly difficult to make numbers work together unless disciplined as you would discipline a regiment. The obvious want of discipline and organisation in our civil service, has been a source of difficulties, and even of fatal mistakes in the commencement of this war. In any community of reasonable beings, there-

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fore in any community of women, as of men, there must be gradations of capacity*, and difference of work.

* "Many years ago, during a residence in Warrington,— at that period the seat of a number of branches of industry demanding artistic skill, as the manufacture of flint glass, of files, and of all kinds of tools,—when sitting one night by the fire of a tool-maker, I was struck by the beauty of the small files, vices, and other tools used in watch-making. Knowing that he employed apprentices, I asked if he found that they all had the steady patience, the clearness of sight, and delicacy of hand required for such work; to which he replied, that not half attained the skill to qualify them, at the end of their term, for journeymen; that some gave up the attempt to learn the branch, and went to another; that others, who completed their apprenticeship, if they remained, got employment only when trade was brisk; when it was slack they were the first to be discharged; whilst others, again, became labourers, that is, *served* the skilful hands.

"I next inquired of a glass manufacturer, himself originally a workman, what proportion, apprenticed to the flint-glass making, were worth retaining as journeymen; when he replied—'Out of ten apprenticed, not three prove good hands; the others mostly fall to the lower branches, as tending the furnaces and the like; a certain number, too, are retained in the place of boys, that is, as the glass-blowers' assistants: but when fresh appren-

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To make or require vows of obedience is objectionable; yet we know that the voluntary

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tice lads are taken, or when trade is slack, these inferior hands are sure to be dismissed.' In respect to glass-cutting, he said, that probably not half the apprentices turn out expert; that they drop away out of the branch; but he was unable to say to what else they betook themselves. With the same object I continued, in subsequent years, to inquire of master shoemakers, tailors, letter-press printers, bookbinders, and of masters in other trades demanding dexterity and skill, and have found that a considerable proportion of those put to acquire such branches either fail to do so and drop lower, or they remain in them and are known by the name of *botchers*. In this way the descent of numbers in every trade goes on continually, and shows an inequality in mankind, as to talents, that will ever baffle the hopes of those enthusiastic reformers who, in their schemes, or rather dreams, of social improvement, overlook this natural diversity, and who would regard all the individuals composing the labouring class as entitled to share in the fruits of labour."—"I refer to *natural* inequality, for which there is no help—as distinguished from *culpable* inequality, the effect of evil passions and tempers which generate habits injurious or even completely obstructive to success in life."—(*On Municipal Government.*)

A wisely organised system of work—intellectual and moral as well as mechanical work—provides for this *natural* inequality, and does not place human beings in

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nurses who went to the East were called upon to do what comes to the same thing — to sign an engagement to obey implicitly a controlling and administrative power — or the whole undertaking must have fallen to the ground. Then, again, questions about costume have been mooted which appear to me wonderfully absurd. It has been suggested that there should be something of uniformity and fitness in the dress worn when on duty, and this seems but reasonable. I recollect once seeing a lady in a gay light muslin dress, with three or four flounces, and roses under her bonnet, going forth to visit her sick poor. The incongruity struck the mind painfully — not merely as an incongruity, but as an impropriety, like a soldier going to the trenches in opera hat and laced ruffles. Such follies, arising from individual obtuseness, must

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positions which they are *naturally* unable to fill with advantage to themselves or others; and that would be a strange law which should oblige a master manufacturer to employ *botchers* in the place of skilled workmen because they present themselves, and because they also have a right to live by their work.

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be met by regulations dictated by good sense, and submitted to as a matter of necessity and obligation.

But it is not my intention to go into any of these minor points of discipline and questions of detail. One great object has been achieved — a principle has been admitted, a precedent has been established, of female labour organised for noble purposes of public utility, approved by public opinion, guided and assisted by man's more comprehensive intellect, sustained and sanctioned by the authority of the ruling powers. All schemes for the public good, in which men and women do not work in communion, have in them the seeds of change, discord, and decay. Some time ago Miss Bremer (the Swedish authoress) planned a sort of universal feminine coalition — a sort of female corresponding society for sundry pious and charitable purposes. Her plan virtually excluded the co-operation of the masculine brain, thus dividing what Nature herself has decreed should never be disunited without mis-

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chief, the element of *power* and the element of *love*. The idea was simply absurd and necessarily impracticable. Such an association of one half of the human species in an attitude of independence as regards the other, would excite a spirit of antagonism in the men; and among the women, would have speedily degenerated into a gossiping, scribbling, stitching community, unstable as water; and nothing more need be said of it here, except that it fully deserved the witty rebuke it met with, though not solely nor chiefly on the alleged grounds.

And now I may leave the question at the point to which I have brought it. I will only add that the history of the past, of the possible, of the actually accomplished, which I have here rapidly sketched out, should give us courage in the present and hope for the future.

It is a subject of reproach that in this Christendom of ours, the theory of good which we preach should be so far in advance of our practice; but that which provokes the sneer of

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the sceptic and almost kills faith in the sufferer, lifts up the contemplative mind with hope. Man's *theory* of good is God's *reality;* man's experience, is the degree to which he has already worked out, in his human capacity, that divine reality. Therefore, whatever our practice may be, let us hold fast to our theories of possible good; let us at least, however they outrun our present powers, keep them in sight, and then our formal lagging practice may in time overtake them. In social morals as well as in physical truths, "The goal of yesterday will be the starting point of to-morrow;" and the things before which all England now stands in admiring wonder will become "the simple produce of the common day." Thus we hope and believe.

THE END.

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